

Keats, helping to print the posthumous
verse of the still
neglected Shelley, whose aery spirit held so
strange an
appeal for his own earthy one; or scribbling
imitations of
Elizabethan drama, with a power that
seems to spring
from him full-grown; or stealthily hacking
the pages of
his first published volume from the bindings
of the copies
on his friends' shelves. Then there appears
for a moment
the young law-student, working at
Southampton under
that most poetic of solicitors, Kelsall, who
was to struggle
with heroic resistance to keep alive the
memory of
Beddoes' work for a generation after its
author's death
and right up to the eve of his own; next, the
young doctor,
learning to prefer 'Apollo's pillbox to his
lyre*' and Ger-
many to England; growing into a stoic,
prosaic, grim
anatomist, and yet still turning at instants
from skull and
scalpel to retouch the everlasting *Death's
Jest-Book*; and
last of all the obscure revolutionary, hunted
from Bavaria
to Zurich, from Zurich back to Germany,
then deported
in turn from Hanover, from Prussia, and
from Bavaria
once more. He has by now almost forgotten
his country.
His rare visits only inflame his indifference
into active
irritation with 'this dull, idle, pampered
isle'. He has
become more and more bizarre. His talk
shows a morbid
preoccupation with death's-heads and
skeletons. Sisters

and cousins object to his habits of lying in
bed all day,
drinking perhaps (or, as he called it, 'having
neuralgia');
and then prowling like a spectre about the
house all night.
He arrived at the residence of one relative
at Cheney
Longville in Shropshire mounted, it is said,
upon an ass.
Was he sane, this sombre recluse whom the
Procters one
evening found struggling with the
attendants at Drury
Lane Theatre, which he had been trying to
set on fire by
holding a lighted five-pound note under a
chaire There
must have been, sighs of relief among the
Beddoeses of